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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted among Lutheran pastors to: (1) identify their learning priorities; (2) determine the effect of longetivity on these priorities; (3) determine the differences in their learning priorities according to geographical location; and (4) determine their perceptions of the adequacy of learning resources available to them. A survey questionnaire was distributed to 700 pastors in the five synods supporting the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary; 169, or 25 percent, completed and returned the questionnaire. The top priorities registered by all respondents were: (1) evaluate your personal ministry and career; (2) develop partnership for ministry with laymen; and (3) develop your own general counseling skills. Study of the effects of longevity revealed that the near-retirement group (36-40 year interval) seems to have more priorities in common with the youngest group (1-4 year interval) than with the middle-aged group (16-20 and 28-32 year interval). Resources considered to be most inadequate were those associated with improving specific ministerial skills. Significant differences were recorded in learning priorities in each age category from synod to synod. Suggestions for further study are made. Appendices provide contents of the questionnaire and data summaries. (KM)

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SURVEY OF PASTORS' CONCERNS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SOUTHERN SEMINARY
Columbia, South Carolina

The Reverend Martin F. Saarinen, Director of Continuing Education for the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, recently conducted a survey to determine the concerns of pastors in continuing education. The survey was conducted over a period of five months from March 1972 through July 1972.

Objectives

The objectives of the survey included:

1. to identify pastors' learning priorities;
2. to determine the effect of longevity on pastors' learning priorities;
3. to determine the differences in Pastors' learning priorities according to geographical location.
4. to determine pastors' perceptions of the adequacy of learning resources available to them in their areas.

Procedure

The survey consisted of three basic steps:

- identification of learning objectives;
- development of a questionnaire;
- dispatch of the questionnaire to pastors.

Twenty-two learning objectives were identified through small groups and individual interviewers with pastors and laymen. These interviews sought to select perceived needs in pastors' continuing education. Thirty-nine pastors and fifteen laymen were involved in the interviews

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with Pastor Saarinen. Specifically, this group of fifty-four persons included:

- 27 parish pastors
- 6 judicatory officials
- 4 continuing education professionals
- 12 persons in non-church related occupations and professions
- 5 seminary educators

A survey questionnaire was then developed to gather the data which would achieve the objectives of the survey. Specifically, the questionnaire sought each respondents's perceptions on:

- his own personal priorities within the stated learning objective objective:
- the availability to him of educational opportunities to achieve the twenty-two learning objectives:
- his evaluation of the adequacy of the resources available to him.

This questionnaire (See Appendix A) was distributed to seven hundred pastors in the five synods of the Lutheran Church in America which support the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary: Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Southeastern, and Virginia.

Results

A capsule summary of the survey results shows that:

- 169 pastors completed the questionnaire and returned it, representing a 25% return and providing a sufficient basis to trust the data:

- 8 other pastors returned the questionnaire either blank or improperly filled in,
- the respondents registered from 1 to 42 years in the ordained ministry;
    - average number of years: 13;
    - the median was 12 years, indicating that a slightly larger number of younger pastors (below the average 13 years) responded than did older pastors;
- a significantly larger number of pastors, proportionately, in the 1 - 4 year interval in ministry responded to the questionnaire than did pastors in the other groups. This was determined by comparing the distribution of the respondents with a 25% random sampling of pastors from all five synods.
- the distribution of both the survey respondents and the synod samplings indicated peaks at the 16 - 20 year interval and the 32 - 36 interval;
- the survey respondents' distribution curve peaked in the 1 - 4 year interval, which varies significantly from the synod samplings;

- three intervals (1 - 4, 16-20, and 32-36) will be used along with the 36-40 year interval (pre-retirement) as the bases for studying the effects of longevity on pastors' perceived needs in continuing education.

Highest Priorities

The three top priorities registered by the 160 respondents were:

- evaluate your personal ministry and career
- develop partnership for ministry with laymen
- develop your own general counseling skills.

Nine other areas selected by the pastors as having high priority include:

- plan and guide your personal career
- develop stronger relationships with your fellow pastors
- improve your skills in group goal-setting, program-building, and budget making
- develop your group leadership skills
- increase your effectiveness in preaching and teaching
- improve your skills in training leaders and teachers
- manage the affairs of the congregation more skillfully
- deal more effectively with diversity among persons and groups
- understand and relate to current issues affecting your ministry.

Lowest Priorities

The 160 respondents selected six areas of lowest priority:

- increase your general knowledge in subject matter areas
- do scholarly research on the parish
- develop a program of directed study
- experience different contexts for ministry
- improve your family money management
- improve relationships with your wife and family

Effects of Longevity on Pastors' Concerns in Continuing Education

The chart, below illustrates the highest priorities for pastors in the various year-intervals. Pastors in the 1-4 year interval selected two areas of highest priority; those in the 16-20 year interval, three, pastors in the 28-32 year interval, four; and those in the 36-40 year interval, five. In general, it appears that the numbers of learning priorities increases with longevity (note Chart #2 on page 3).

The data, as illustrated in the charts, suggest that pastors, as a group, have the following concerns:

1-4 Year Interval

- An evaluation of the effectiveness of their ministry
- An assessment of their personal skills
- A supportive Relationship with other pastors.

16-20 and 28-32 Year Interval

- Desire skills that would enable groups to work more effectively

36-40 Year Interval

- Increase individual competencies
- Desire supportive relationships with others.

This latter, the near-retirement group, seems to have more in common with the youngest group than with its middle-aged colleagues. This data seemed to substantiate the findings of other inter-generational studies.

CHART # 1

Areas of Highest Priority for Learning

Level	1 - 4 Years	16 - 20 Years	28 - 32 Years	36 - 40 Years
1	Evaluate personal career and ministry	Develop partnership for ministry with laymen.	Evaluate personal career and ministry.	Grow as a person in relationship to others outside the family,
2	develop general counseling skills	deal more effectively with diversity among persons and groups	develop partnership for ministry with laymen	improve skill in group goal setting, etc.
3		develop counseling, preaching, leadership, and management skills	increase effectiveness as a teacher	relate theology to ministry and daily living
4			improve skills in developing leaders and teachers	develop general counseling skills
5				understand and relate effectively to current issue affecting ministry

Adequacy of Learning Resources Available to Pastors in Their Areas

Resources considered by the respondents to be most inadequate for learning were for the following learning priorities: (See Page B-8)

- develop partnership for ministry with laymen
- improve skills in training leaders and teachers
- manage the affairs of the congregation
- improve skills in group goal-setting, etc.
- evaluate personal ministry and career.

Pastors considered the resources for increasing their general knowledge in subject matter fields as very adequate. This may have been a reason why this item had such a low priority rating on the questionnaire returns. The way this question as well as others on the questionnaire may have been too ambiguously stated to really trust the response.

Differences in Pastors' Learning Priorities By Geographical Location

Significant differences are recorded in learning priorities in each age category from synod to synod. The data seem to indicate that there is an inverse relationship between the kinds of educational opportunities available and pastors' development priorities.

The survey data also showed considerable variation form synod to synod and within the synods regarding year-interval and learning priorities. The following charts compare the synods to one another. (Note: Numbers are used for the learning priorities. Numbers are listed in Appendix A.)

CHART # 1

Learning Priorities By Age-Group and Synod

	1-4	16-20	28-32	36-40
F L A	1 16	1 2 16 10	6 15 18 10	1 9 K 3 11 16 4 12 5 13
N C	1 9	7 21	None	1 6 10 19 4 7 12 22 5 9 17 16 17
S C	1 13	9 15	17 1 19	1 16 3 17 4
S E	1	14 18 1	None	6 10 20 7 17 8 18
V A	1 5	9	1 5	2 6 13 3 9 4 12 21

Notes to Chart

1. Respondents in the 1-4 year interval and the 16-20 year interval in the Florida Synod were more similar than those two groups in any other synod.

2. For the pastors in North Carolina, the concerns of those in the 1-4 year interval were fourth level concerns for those in the 16-20 year interval; whereas their priorities second level concerns for the younger group.

3. Respondents from the South Carolina Synod in the 1-4 year interval indicated no less than six concerns of top priority. In general, they clustered around evaluation and development of skills for one's own ministry. enabling others in their ministries, and relating effectively to issues affecting ministry today.

4. Top priority concerns (Level #1 out of a total of 10 levels) for the 1-4 year respondents in Virginia came in at middling fourth and fifth level concerns, respectively, for the men in the 16-20 year interval. Conversely, the high priority item for the 16-20 year respondents came in at a fourth level concern for the 1-4 year respondents.

Suggestions for Further Study

Three areas for further study suggest themselves:

- validation of questionnaire items
- extension of survey to include representative numbers of laymen and pastors of other denominations so that the results could be compared with the results of this survey.
- effects of ministering context on pastor's development priorities.

APPENDIX A

Contents of "Pastors' Continuing Education Opportunities - A Questionnaire and Rating Scale".

Instructions: In the blank space below each item, pastors were asked to indicate the opportunities (groups, institutions, programs, events, etc.) available to them in their areas which could help them. They could list any one item more than once.

The questionnaire further offered two scales for rating each of the 22 learning priorities. The one: "How high a priority is this item for you? Indicate by writing a number." The range was from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The second scale asked: "In your opinion, how competent is the help you could receive? Indicate by writing a number." The scale ranged from 1 (poorP through 5 (excellent), with 3 indicating, "I don't know".

<u>The twenty-two learning priorities listed include:</u>

1. Evaluate your personal ministry and career.
2. Plan and guide your personal career.
3. Improve relationships with your wi wife and family.
4. Grow as a person in relation to others outside the family.
5. Develop stronger relationships with your fellow pastors.
6. Improve your skills in group goal-setting, program-building and budget making.
7. Develop your group leadership skills.
8. Improve your family money management.
9. Develop your own general counseling skills.
10. Experience different contexts for ministry
11. Increase your general knowledge in subject matter areas(e.g., history, anthropology, sociology, etc.)
12. Relate Theology to your ministry and daily living.
13. Understand and relate to current issues affecting your ministry.
14. Manage the affairs of the congregation more skillfully.
15. Develop partnership for ministry with laymen.
16. Increase your effectiveness in preaching.
17. Increase your effectiveness as a teacher.
18. Improve your skills in training leaders and teachers.
19. Develop your public relations skills.
20. Do scholarly research on the parish.
21. Deal more effectively with diversity among persons and groups.
22. Develop a program of directed study.

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SOUTHERN SEMINARY

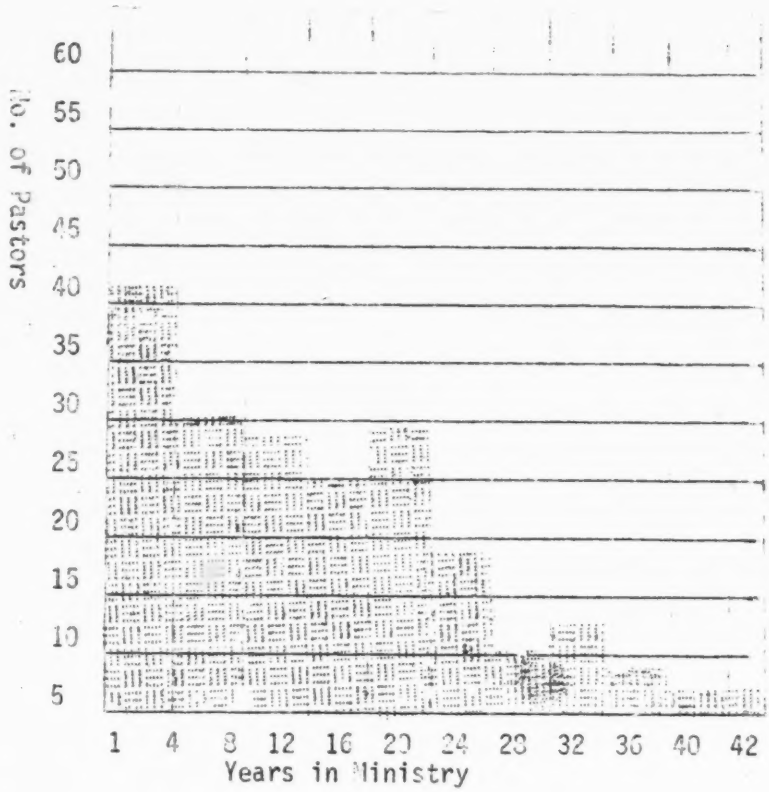
SURVEY OF PASTORS' CONCERNS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

Data Summary

Years in Ministry - Questionnaire Respondents

Composite

Midpts		Tallies	Totals
2	x	37	74
6	x	25	150
10	x	24	240
14	x	21	294
18	x	24	432
22	x	14	308
26	x	6	156
30	x	8	240
34	x	4	136
38	x	3	114
42	x	3	126
		169	2270



Range: 1 - 41

Sample: 169 Completed Questionnaire
8 Blanks
177 Total Respondents
25% Return on 700 Questionnaires

Median: 12

Mean: 13

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SOUTHERN SEMINARY

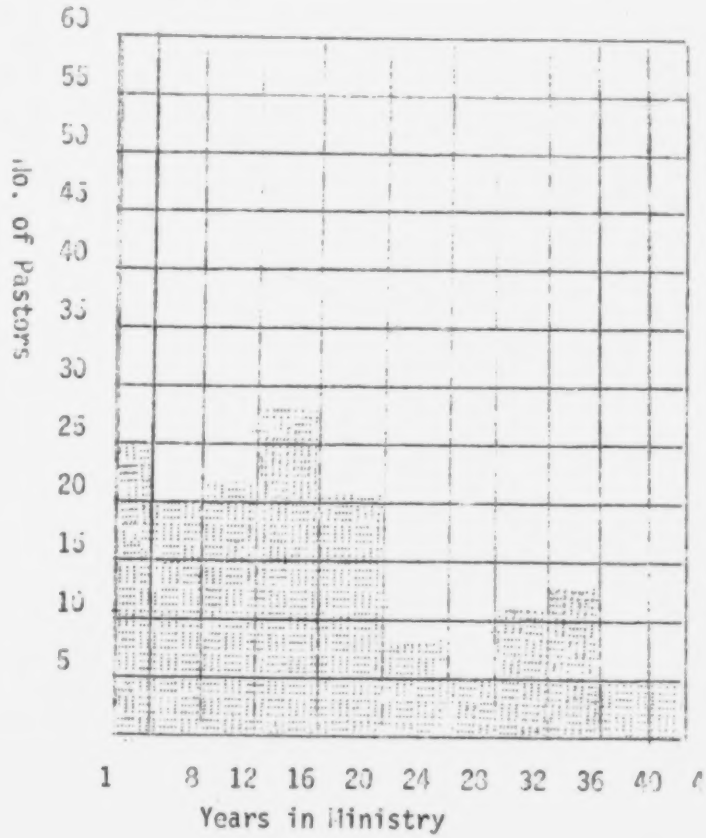
SURVEY OF PASTORS' CONCERNS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

Data Summary

Years in Ministry - Sample of Active Pastors

Composite

Adpts		Tallies	Totals
2	x	20	40
6	x	20	120
10	x	22	220
14	x	29	406
18	x	17	306
22	x	13	176
26	x	6	156
30	x	11	330
34	x	14	476
38	x	6	228
42	x	5	210
		153	2663



Range: 1 - 41

Sample: 150 25% Random 5 Synods

Median: 18

Mean: 16.9

Sources: 1971 and 1972 Minutes of Virginia North Carolina, South Carolina, Southeastern, and Florida Synods of the Lutheran Church in America

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SURVEY OF PASTORS' CONCERNS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

DATA SUMMARY

Composite

Areas of Greatest Concern: All Respondents
(Rated #4 or #5 on Questionnaire)

Levels +

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	10	8
9	5	4	20	
15	6	11	22	
	7	19		
	12			
	13			
	14			
	16			
	17			
	18			
	21			

Areas of Least Concern

(Rated #1 or #2 on Questionnaire)

Levels -

6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	20	
7	4	8		
9	5	10		
	6	11		
	12	22		
	13			
	14			
	15			
	16			
	17			
	18			
	19			
	21			

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SURVEY OF PASTORS' CONCERNS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

DATA SUMMARY

Composite

Areas of Greatest Concern:
16 - 20 Year Interval
(Rated #4 or #5 on Questionnaire)

Levels +

1	2	3	4	5
	7	1	2	8
	9	6	3	18
	14	12	4	20
	15	17	5	
	16	19	10	
	21		11	
			13	
			22	

Areas of Least Concern

(Rated #1 or #2 on Questionnaire)

Levels -

6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	20	
4	8			
5	11			
6	13			
7				
9				
10				
12				
14				
15				
17				
18				
19				
21				
22				

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SOUTHERN SEMINARY

SURVEY OF PASTORS' CONCERNS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

DATA SUMMARY

Composite

Areas of Greatest Concern:
Pastors in 1-4 Yr.
(Rated #4 or #5 on Questionnaire)

Levels +

1	2	3	4	5
1	5	2	11	8
9	6	3	19	10
	7	4	22	20
	13	12		
	15	14		
	16	17		
	18			
	21			

Areas of Least Concern

(Rated #1 or #2 on Questionnaire)

Levels -

6	7	8	9	10
1	16	10	20	
2		11		
3		19		
4		22		
5				
6				
8				
9				
12				
13				
14				
15				
17				
18				
21				

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SOUTHERN SEMINARY

SURVEY OF PASTORS' CONCERNS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

DATA SUMMARY

Composite

Areas of Greatest Concern:

25 - 32 Yr. Interval

(Rated #4 or #5 on Questionnaire
Levels +

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	6	22	
5	3	13		
17	4			
13	5			
	7			
	9			
	10			
	11			
	12			
	14			
	16			
	19			
	21			

Areas of Least Concern

(Rated #1 or #2 on Questionnaire)

Levels -

6	7	8	9	10
9	5	13	2	8
	6	14	3	
	7	17	4	
	10	18	11	
	12	20	22	
	15			
	16			
	21			

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SOUTHERN SEMINARY

SURVEY OF PASTORS' CONCERNS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

DATA SUMMARY

Composite:

Areas of Greatest Concern:
36 - 40 Yr. Interval
(Rated #4 or #5 on Questionnaire)

Levels +

1	2	3	4	5
	4	1	2	
	6	3	8	
	9	5	11	
	12	7	14	
	13	10	18	
		15	19	
		16	22	
		17		
		20		
		21		

Areas of Least Concern
(Rated #1 or #1 on Questionnaire)

Levels -

6	7	8	9	10
	3	1	2	
	4	22	8	
	5			
	9			
	10			
	11			
	12			
	13			
	14			
	16			
	18			
	19			
	20			
	21			

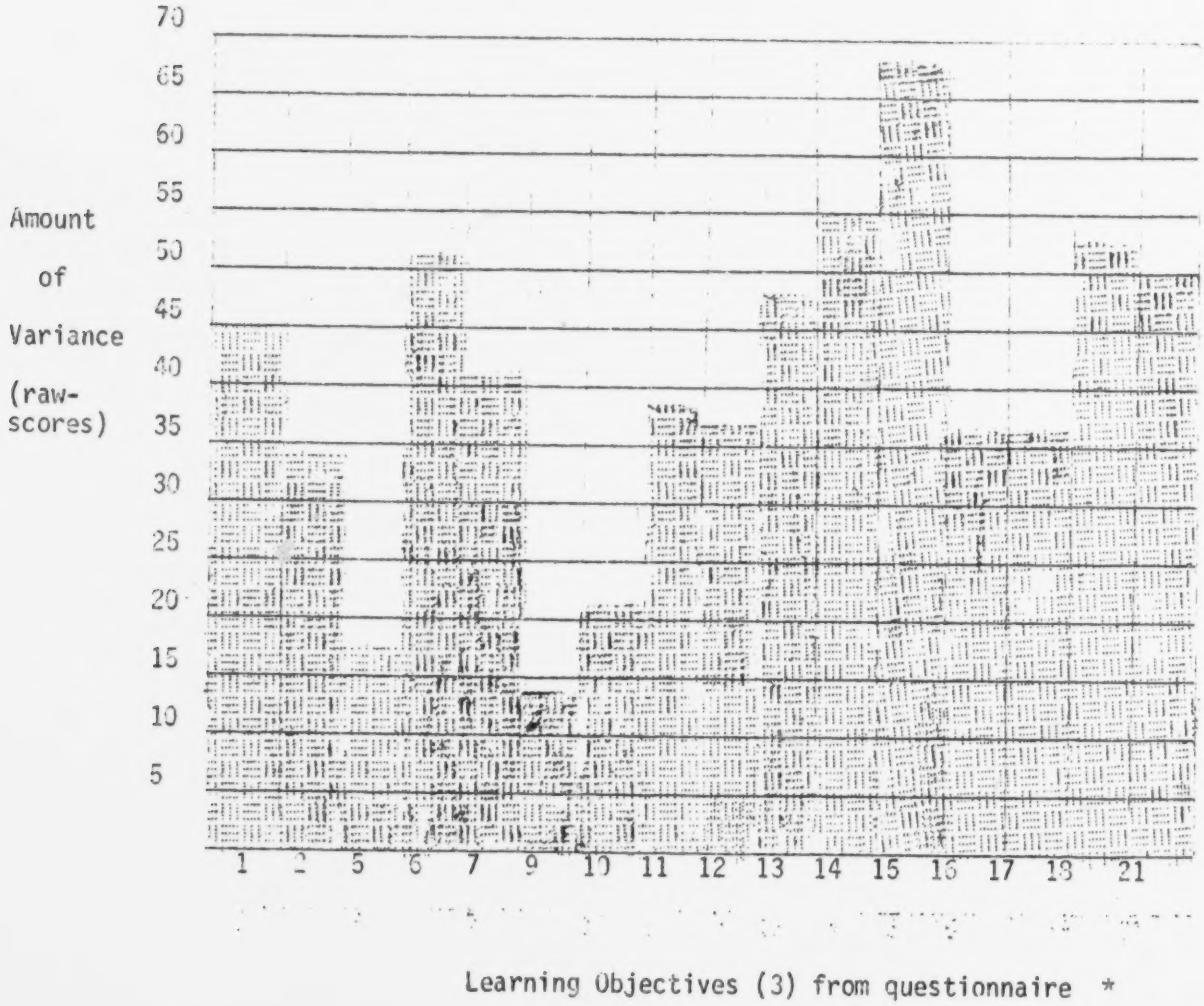
LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SOUTHERN SEMINARY

SURVEY OF PASTORS' CONCERNS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

Data Summary

Composite

Amount of Variance Between Valuations of Personal Priorities and Adequacy (1) of Available Resources (2).



(1) As determined by respondents' own assessments.

(2) Total of 165 different sources listed on questionnaire returns.

(3) Only those learning objectives which had a significant difference between personal priority and valuation of adequacy of resources were used.

*Negative variance i.e. Respondents indicated item has low priority, but excellent resources are available.

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